NEWS — 2025 ELECTIONS

Philip Frattaroli to be Winchester's 12th town moderator since 1915

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

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Philip Frattaroli is running unopposed for town moderator in the townwide election March 22. He says he's very excited to take on a role he's been waiting for his whole life. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

It's a foregone conclusion. Philip Frattaroli will be Winchester's 1 moderator.

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Sure, the townwide election is just days away, but Frattaroli is running unopposed for the seat being vacated by Heather von Mering, who has been in the role since March 2020.

"I decided to take it on because of my admiration for John Sullivan," Frattaroli said, of his desire to be moderator. "Heather had told people she wasn't going to run and then she told me one more year. She then made me her deputy and taught me what I needed to know."

Sullivan served as a three-term member of the Select Board, from 1967-76 and was town moderator for 37 years, from 1977-2014. He died in 2021

Frattaroli said Sullivan often came into Lucia's, having a standing reservation. He watched and listened to the moderator and eventually decided he was going to join Town Meeting when he was old enough.

"John was my role model," Frattaroli said. "I love Town Meeting. When I was a member, I would enjoy the back and forth, the debates. I love hearing the reports part of it."

That was 2021, when Frattaroli came onto a Town Meeting that was remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said as a moderate, he would show up at Town Meeting without having made up his mind and listen to the debates before casting his vote.

"It was a perfect fit for me," he says, calling himself a political dork.

Coming together

Historically, Winchester Town Meeting was an open forum where everyone could come debate the issues — until 1928. That's when the town

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to a representative form of government because too many people were showing up.

In 1915, the town decided on a full-time moderator. Until then, the first order of business was to elect someone to run the meeting.

Since that decision, there have been only 11 town moderators. Frattaroli will be number 12.

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These are the facts Frattaroli has given off the top of his head. Asked how he knows all this, he admits he's been to see Dr. Ellen Knight, the town historian.

This is a job he's taking very seriously.

"It's a tough job," Frattaroli said, of the moderator position. "There are about 700 pages of Roberts Rules [of Order] that you have to know. You're there and you have to ready to go."

But he also has Town Clerk MaryEllen Marshall and Town Counsel Jay Talerman to rely on.

"I've seen how the sausage is made," Frattaroli said, of his year under von Mering. "I went to law school so this wasn't that different."

Frattaroli said his role as town moderator is to be the arbiter of the rules.

"My job is to be impartial," he said. "I want to run a fair, open and efficient Town Meeting."

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He added his goal is to bring people together, adding there are too many factions in town. He wants to see Winchester united to solve the issues facing the community.

"I'm here to serve Town Meeting," he said. "I want to make sure the process is fair. I want people to have their say, but I don't want them to go on forever, either."

What's on the agenda?

Frattaroli is glad he's running unopposed. He finds it hard to ask people for their vote, let alone putting up signs or who knows what.

Traditionally, he said, the moderator has been unopposed.

"It's so much better this way," Frattaroli said. "I really don't want people out there campaigning for me. I want to be an impartial presence in Winchester, someone who is non-partisan and hands off."

And if everything goes as planned during Election Day, March 22, Frattaroli will be sworn into office on March 24. He said there's already plenty to do, with appointments on the agenda, a possible change in Town Meeting from Roberts Rules of Order to Town Meeting Time and of course, preparing the warrant.

"That prep was super helpful," he said, of his time shadowing von Mering. "I think it was very good exposure to what the job is. But, I will still have the first day of school jitters when I get up there!"

A big smile crosses Frattaroli's face as he admits he really can't wait for April 29, when the Spring Town Meeting kicks off.

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"I really look forward to this every six months," he said. "It's a lot of fun. And I'm very excited about it. I grew up here and I really love this town."

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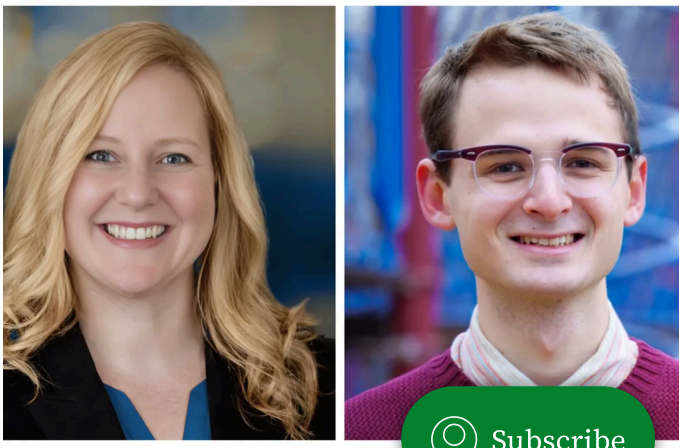

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'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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